

January 28, 2003

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, CY-B402
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 02-384
Application by the Verizon Corporation for Authorization Under Section 271 of the
Communications Act to Provide In-Region, Interlata Services in the District of
Columbia, Maryland and West Virginia

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The National Black Chamber of Commerce (NBCC) represents the interests of the more than 85,000 Black-owned businesses with 201 affiliated chapters located in 40 states (including the District of Columbia, Maryland and West Virginia) and eight countries. For the reasons articulated below NBCC supports Verizon's application to provide long-distance service to consumers in the District of Columbia, Maryland and West Virginia. One of NBCC's primary goals is the removal of barriers to commerce. The lack of access to competitive, long-distance service is such a barrier that continues to disproportionately impact under served rural and urban communities where many small, woman and minority-owned businesses are located.

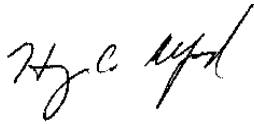
NBCC believes that consumers in the District of Columbia, Maryland and West Virginia should benefit from Verizon's entry in the long-distance market just as those consumers did in markets where 271 approval has been given such as New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania (to name a few). Verizon's entry will incentivize competitors to provide local, long-distance and data services to consumers within this five-state area. This will especially benefit African Americans, who use long distance service at a much higher rate than the average American.

Rapid deployment of current and next generation technology to access the Internet is a high priority. Yet African American use of the Internet is only 4 % of America's total usage. Verizon's entry will enable the deployment of competitive broadband and advanced services. This will enable small businesses – many of which are NBCC members – to engage in E-commerce globally. NBCC's view is that today a business either has an Internet presence or it is

doomed for extinction. Verizon's entry into the long-distance market will likely lead to greater availability and lower prices for broadband and advanced services hereby affording our constituents with the opportunity to help this country to sustain its nascent economic recovery.

NBCC respectfully requests the FCC to quickly approve Verizon's application. We are confident that the FCC's approval will remove the barrier to access to competitive, long-distance service for consumers in the District of Columbia, Maryland and West Virginia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H.C. Alford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Harry C. Alford
President & CEO
National Black Chamber of Commerce

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